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SONNETS

AND SHORT POEMS



BY

JOHN BRAGG





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Mr + Mrs Leonard Brierley

Feb 12 1890

LB

S^r
Sonnets

and

Short Poems.

Not unto us, not unto us, O Lord !
But be the glory to Thy name alone !
For humbly, gladly, gratefully I own
No merit can be mine ! If any word
Hearain be good, to Thee I now accord
The praise ! No winged thought had flown
From my poor wave-worn ark had I not known
Thy Word and Church ! It was Thy spirit poured
The rains that made a spring well up in me !
And, now, if any wanderer should see
This little brooklet as it flows along ;
If at its simple stream such weary one
Should drink and be refreshed; my wish is won ;
"Non nobis Domina" for ever be my song !

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Yours ever truly
John Bragg

(For Presentation only).

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1890

SRLF

Sonnets

and

Short Poems

(Second Series)

by

John Bragg

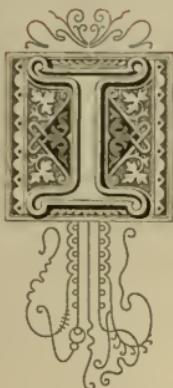
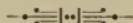
1890.

Printed by Alfred W. Inman,

New Wortley,

Leeds.

PREFACE.



N offering to his friends another little volume of Sonnets and Short Poems, the Author has to mention that many of them have appeared in English and American magazines. Requests have been made that he would publish a volume for sale. But dismissing that idea, he determined to select and print for presentation such as he hopes may prove acceptable.

Contemplating only this narrow limit of circulation, and counting on a friendly and even sympathetic perusal, he ventures to include some pieces of a more private or personal character than could otherwise have appeared. These remarks apply also to the printing of certain names, without which the interest of some verses would be diminished.

A few "Children's Riddle Rhymes" are appended to the Miscellaneous selection. These were written in 1883-4 for the Author's grandchildren, Hilda and Alan, and may, perhaps, possess some interest for the younger members of other families. The notes made as to "guessing," when they were first read, are retained.

HAMSTEAD MOUNT,

HANDSWORTH,

BIRMINGHAM,

January 8th, 1890.

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❧ PART + I. ❧

Poems on Religious Subjects.



Dedication.

AH ! deem it not presumptuous that I
Thus dedicate the book to one most dear,
Who, years ago, by death upraised from here,
Is now invisible to mortal eye !
Can I forget that inward tender tie ?
No ! for she lives, she loves—is ever near
As thought to thought, or love to love is clear ;
An active presence that can never die !
Therefore, to thee, my Wife, I give these lines
(Or serious or gay, for child or sage) ;
The good they purpose, though it feebly shines,
Is seen by thee, and will thine aid engage !
Let friends accept the thought, and dwell within
its sphere ;
To me 'tis truth itself—a blessed faith sincere !



The Heavenly Gem.

(HORACE, aged Six Months, died suddenly.)

THE white-winged messenger of heaven was sent
To carry back a gem the LORD had lent.

(O that we had but earlier, wisely known
The darling boy was His, and not our own ;
E'en though the thought had been to us alloy
Commingling with the golden six months' joy !)

He found him on a summer's afternoon,
So beautiful, so passing fair, that soon
Each, looking in the other's smiling face,
Sprang lovingly to mutual soft embrace.

One moment ere the downy pinions rose—
One look, one kiss—and now his eyelids close.

Like sculptured ivory the lovely body lay,
But Horace, with the gentle angel, passed away.

Invitation.

(Written for a Charity Bazaar Programme).

COME, Youth and Beauty, join Old Age to-day
 Our Festival of Charity to grace :
 Leave care and cloud behind ; this is no place
 For sadness ! We rejoice a debt to pay
 That weighs down suffering humanity !
 This is a day for open hands and hearts !
 He shall be happiest who most gladly parts
 With golden gifts to raise infirmity
 To strength, turn grief to joy, and pain to ease !
 Let all combine our gracious GOD to please,
 By aiding those who sick and helpless lie,
 And soothing some who weary wait to die.
 Come, ye who live in happy luxury ;
 Come all who feel for others' want and woe ;
 Give ! and afresh the holy blessing know ;
 For "Blessed of the Lord" all such shall be !

“Lux in Tenebris.”

(*A Picture by Sir Noel Paton, R.S.A., LL.D.*)

This wonderful picture suggests to me rather different ideas of the painter's meaning from any I have heard expressed. The fear of death is universal. It is natural to humanity, and only the Lord, by spiritual considerations, can free us from it. Nor is it overcome by any one at once. The brightest trust in the Lord is tried by many deep doubts, even until the last.

The painter has chosen the moment when this dread fear is beginning to pass away for ever. The tried soul, just entering into the vale “which us from life doth sever,” is represented with the lips open, and the next moment the whole aspect will be changed into joyful exultation.

O DEATH ! Thy terrors fill my passing soul
 With agony of fear ! What is my goal ?
 How shall I tread the valley all alone ?
 But see ! One beckons me and says, “ Be not afraid ; ”
 ‘Tis the Good Shepherd ! Oh that I had known !
 Yet, shall I—dare I—trust Him through the shade ?
 With infinite compassion, drawing near
 And closer still, He takes my trembling hand ;
 Now, clasping His with new-born faith, I stand ;
 He looks into my face ;—my way is clear !
 His loving presence and His touch Divine
 Are life eternal, and that life is mine !
 My Lord, my Saviour ! Now all fear is flown ;
 Thou art my light in darkness ;—Thou alone !

The Thought of Death.

HOW often does the thought of death arise,
And, spectre-like, our troubled steps attend,
As 't were a foe! But, when perceived as friend
And welcomed so, ah, then with glad surprise
His aspect changes into such sweet guise
As those may wear who greet us when we wake
From his dark slumber, where the light shall break
In pure angelic visions on our eyes.

If we could care enough for heavenly things,
The thought of death we need nor fear nor shun ;
But just as sleep invites the weary one ;
As calm, the sailor tossed by tempest wings ;
So bright the view of death to him should be
Who sees beyond its shadow life's reality.

In Memoriam.

REV. JONATHAN BAYLEY, M.A., Ph.D.,

Died May 12th, 1886; Aged 76.

AH! how shall mortal fitly sing his praise,
Or shadow forth the greatness of his soul?
He who has passed away, so full of days,—
No longer answering to our muster-roll!

He, the lov'd pastor, preacher, faithful friend,
The lamb-like champion with a lion's heart,
Who with the wisest, gentlest touch could bend
And win men over to the "better part."

With pen or voice, sweet smile and earnest tone,
With tear of sympathy, or guiding council wise,
He cheered the drooping, urged the wavering on,
Confirmed the weak, and bade the fallen rise.

His words distilled the morning dew of peace,
Or shed refreshing showers on thirsty ground;
His radiant presence caused despair to cease,
Like sunshine bursting through the gloom profound.

A child with children; sage among the sage;
A hero—almost idol—to the young;
A confidant, who kept the secret page
For ever hidden; master of his tongue!

He was a tower of strength to all around;
 Nor did he draw that strength from human source;
 No! in the LORD alone supplies he found
 By constant prayer,—his first and last resource!

Did he but hear the Master's inward call,
 " Go, seek that sheep!" though flesh might crave for
 rest,
 He rose at once, triumphant over all;
 Nor storm, nor weariness delayed the quest.

The armoury Divine right well he knew:
 Each weapon with its proper use and place;
 And daily entering there, came out anew
 Equipped, and fully armed by heavenly grace.

The WORD was " very nigh to him ; yea, in
 His mouth and in his heart " a constant joy !
 His life—one ceaseless effort against sin—
 Was pure as precious gold without alloy.

And as he lived, just so he calmly died !
 Heaven rolled the clouds away, and to his sight
 Unveiled its glories, bidding him abide
 Close to his Saviour, ever in His light !

Precious Time.

WHY should we wish for our life to fly rapidly past ?
Surely the longest is short enough,—too short
at last !

Is there not daily some duty, some work left undone ?
“Wanting but time,”—so we say; yet we wish the
day gone !

Precious be moments,—be words,—even glimpses of
thought ;

Each hath its mission of usefulness, if it be sought !
Why do we waste, then, our God-given talent of time ?
Blessed is he who by use makes each moment sublime.

Life.

ONWARD and onward and onward for ever
 Floweth Life's river;
 Coming and glancing and passing: who knoweth
 Whither it goeth?
 Where is the spring of its marvellous fountain?
 Up on what mountain?

Wonderful lamp of life! How was it lighted?
 Say, ye clear-sighted!
 Will it, oh, will it continue undying,
 Our death defying?
 Ever and ever in brilliance increasing?
 Or, is it ceasing?

“Ah,” say the cunning ones—deaf to God’s warning,
 Proud of their scorning—
 “Look not upon it as more of a mystery
 Than a leaf’s history;
 Nature’s development, coming unbidden,
 Its first cause all hidden.”

“ Spark of Life, struck by unknown atoms acting,
 (Reason distracting !)

Born in the darkness ; a brief moment burning ;
 To darkness returning.

This is the end, both of all Nature’s showing
 And possible knowing.”

“ Not so ! ah, not so ! ” a Voice saith within me :
 “ God’s life is in thee.”

This is the message the LORD of life giveth
 To each soul that liveth ;

This is the lesson on each atom printed
 With His image minted.

“ There is a God, the One only Creator,
 The All-Animator ;

From Him the light of life ever outgoeth,—
 Life’s river floweth :

In Him the spring of its wonderful fountain,
 On His love’s mountain ! ”

Passed Away.

(Maggie Lowe, March 26th, 1885, Aged 18.)

“SHE passed away” just when the Spring’s soft breath
 Began to waken Earth from wintry Death :
 Just when the first pale blossoms of the year
 Gave prophecy of Summer drawing near !

She passed away to clearer, brighter skies
 Than ever here could gladden her sweet eyes :
 To softer airs and richer wealth of bloom
 Than can be known, except beyond the tomb.

We say “she passed away!” Yet with us still
 Her gentle tones and loving graces fill
 All hearts that knew her with undying joy,
 With golden Faith too pure for sad alloy.

Yes, “passed away ;” but soon to meet again
 Where cometh no more sorrow, no more pain !
 Where everlasting loves our youth renew,
 And friends can never have to say “Adieu !”

Just “gone before,” and beckoning us to meet
 In flowery meadows where no storms can beat,
 No trees be leafless, and no Winter come ;
 In that perennial Spring—our Father’s home !

On Coming of Age.

(G. H. J., 1889.)

TO-DAY I number birthdays twenty-one ;
 Begin the mystic three times seventh year,
 And am by law a man—my father's peer,
 While still his loving and devoted son.
 And yet I feel no conscious change begun ;
 I crossed the Rubicon without a fear ;
 I felt no thrill of joy ; I shed no tear :
 So calmly doth the stream of being run.

Yet this new dignity must needs demand
 New thoughts, new aspirations, nobler life.
 For these, God helping me, I'll toil ; do all I can
 To realize ideals dim, but grand ;
 If that by effort, culture, needful strife,
 I may but reach the measure of an Angel-man !

A Child's Sweet Kiss.

A CHILD'S sweet kiss! The quick, warm, close
embrace,
The radiant eye, and beauteous beaming face,
The loving words, "Good morning, mother, dear!"
So full of music, deep and soft and clear;
Is it not Heaven itself that lives and shines in this?
Can Heaven itself be purer than a child's sweet kiss?

"Their angels do indeed behold the face
Of God Himself,"—live fully in His grace!
Theirs is the "perfect love that casts out fear"
The hundred year old Christian but draws near.
Yes, it is Heaven itself that gives and shines in this,—
The innocence and rapture of a child's sweet kiss!

Wedding Rings.

NARROW thread of finest gold,
 What doth not thy circle hold !
 Two worlds seem to intertwine
 In that magic space of thine.

Soul and body, mind and flesh
 Mingle in its tiny mesh ;
 Emblem of creation's whole,
 God and Self at either pole !

Every well-worn wedding ring
 Hath its own romance to bring ;
 History able to create
 Warmest love, or deepest hate.

Most could tell a tale of strife ;
 Some but brief, some long as life ;
 Few but knew some gloomy hour,
 Sudden cloud or tempest shower.

This one was in fifteen years
 Furrowed deep with grief and tears ;
 Wealth and outward comfort ! Yes,
 But no love, no tenderness.

Some of bitter things could tell
 Down in depths of social hell ;
 Entered spite of truth and sense,
 Not by marriage consequence.

But not all would thus be sad,
 Some would speak in accents glad ;
 Thankful both to God and man
 For the blessed marriage plan.

From by far the greater share
 Come sweet messages, that bear
 Holy thoughts, and cause to rise
 Crowds of golden memories.

One that looks quite new is here ;
 This was worn but just a year !
 Maiden, wife, and mother met
 In that twelvemonth's rise and set.

Oh, how many more like this !
 Yet they count one year of bliss
 Better far thus lived and known
 Than a century alone.

One is here so worn and thin !
 Great the victory this did win.
 Labour heavy, wages small ;
 Yet a happy life withal.

Look at this one : smooth and bright
 As when first it met her sight ;
 Peacefully has this been worn
 Since the bridal vow was sworn.

Here is one of threescore ten ;
 Far more precious now than then ;
 Having welcomed through its door
 Happy generations four.

Here another, strong and wide,
 With a "posy" verse inside.
 "True till death shall take my breath,"
 True he was, as Posy saith !

Wedding songs that here begin
 Must some discord have from sin ;
 But they grow more rich and sweet
 As the two worlds nearer meet.

Songs of rapture some have heard,
 Thrills of joy in whispered word,
 Bliss for utterance too deep,
 Bliss the heart must secret keep !

Is it utterly beyond
 Possibilities profound
 That a charmed touch shall dwell
 In a thing we love so well ?

Ancient lore and poet's dream
 May yet prove the truth they seem !
 "Heaven and earth cannot all be
 Read by our philosophy."

This, ah ! this, by strange conceit,
 Mother, daughter, grandchild sweet,
 Each the same in reverence wore,
 And a charm it surely bore.

This, upon the husband's hand,
Like a talismanic band,
Many a year brought memories blest
After she had gone to rest.

Yes, he felt the love was there,
So its emblem he would wear ;
Mystic bond of married minds,
Heart to heart that ever binds.

Whence this untaught inborn creed ;
Whence? but from our nature's need !
Holding that where love is true,
Perfect union must ensue.

Surely souls from birth are bent
Each to each in complement !
Is it not God's blessed plan
That such pairs are perfect MAN ?

So true marriage shall endure
Long as heavenly love is sure ;
Ne'er can all its tale be told,
Circled in eternal gold !

The Fourteenth Anniversary of a Wedding.

THEY say that in the ancient mystic days
 All numbers had a meaning, and that seven
 Was symbol of a state akin to Heaven !
 (So it was subject fit for poet's lays.)
 But multiplied, that number still displays
 The same high quality more nobly thriven,
 The same significance more brightly given ;
 And each repeat shows still a loftier phase !

So now, that twice seven married years have flown,
 And wife and children twice as lovely grown,
 With double joys to all who share your own ;
 I wish you yet of years so many more
 As make up ten times seven, ere yet that door
 Be closed, which opens earthward nevermore !

E. M. O.

(Written for a young friend, whose names had these letters for initials.)

AMO—I love ;—most blessed thing to say !
 Grant, Heavenly Father, that I never may
 By word or deed
 Cause hearts to bleed,
 For want of this sweet spirit, praised to-day !
 “Amo” my name ; be it my nature too !
 So let my name be wrought in all I do,
 Like warp of gold,
 Silk weft to hold,
 A rich life-robe of love and lustre through !
 “Amo” without, and “Amo” true within ;
 Free as a bird, and gay, yet without sin ;
 Each duty loved ; each self-denial borne ;
 Let “Amo” this life and the next adorn !

Reverie.

I SAT one evening, pensively, an idle hour alone;
 A veil of sleepless quietude was o'er my senses
 thrown ;
 The sun was set, the sky grew dim, the young moon
 following on ;
 While slowly from the deep blue vault the stars came
 one by one.
 I heard the children out-of-doors,—the bark of rest-
 less hound ;
 Yet neither sight nor voices seemed a real sight or
 sound.

And there, although before mine eyes no written page
 or book
 Was present ; yet, with steady gaze and fascinated
 look,
 I read the page of memory—the crowded ancient
 lines—
 The life-long record, made and stored in secret mental
 mines.
 I saw my pictured history, all pageant-like, appear
 And pass, as on a magic stage, or seen in mirror clear.

Nor passed it silently : I heard each laughing chime
that rung ;

Forgotten words remembered were ; forgotten songs
were sung ;

A thousand voices, long, long still, all came to life
again ;

Not all in peace and love, but some that sobbed with
grief and pain.

My early home, my shaded eyes, and sorrows not a few,
Soothed by a tender Mother's care, all passed in
rapid view.

I heard her jest, to banish tears ; I saw her beam-
ing face,

And nestled like a babe again within her warm em-
brace ;—

The merry meal times, when young wit shot freely
all its shafts ;—

The hidden book-lore, at whose springs I drank for-
bidden draughts ;—

My brothers, sisters, schoolmates, all were talking,
playing there ;

I lived my dreary Sundays o'er, and said my evening
prayer.

I know not how the seasons changed ; they came,
they passed away ;

Yet, altogether, years on years seemed but a single day.
On wondrous wheels of lightning speed my rapid
reading ran ;

So smoothly sped my life along, right onward up to
man.

Ah, me ! if I could only close my memory's record here,

And blot out pages dark and sad of many a following year !

'Tis not an idle fancy that a man lives ages seven !
I was another being then, and less akin to heaven ;
For lower depths were opened up in selfhood's living core

Than I had known of in myself, or even dreamed before.
I saw tumultuous passions rise, defying all control ;—
I traced their course in fiery lines that burnt into my soul.

I saw myself on Ruin's steep, and sliding swiftly down ;
I lived each awful scene again, like those who seem to drown !

But, thanks and praise to Love divine ! another age was gained,

And, ere my record ran to end, a happier page remained.
The horror ceased ; the terror passed ; the light and peace of morn

Came back again, though differently, as when a year is born.

Some footstep roused me, and the sound of loving voices broke

My reverie ! I sighed, and looked, as if from sleep awoke !

But sleep hath not a dream like this,—so consequent, so true :

It was not sleep, but memory's book thus opened to my view !

And now, when tracing o'er again the impress of
that hour,
I seem to feel what "judgment" means, and realize
its power.

For I have heard the better creed: so good it
seems, though new;—
A terror only to the vile;—so fair, it must be true;—
That not a word, a thought or deed, from youth to
latest breath,
But leaves its record in the soul, for verdict after
death;—
A verdict,—one with life itself, that none can disavow;
For each will see his inmost state more clearly far
than now.

Thus Truth will be our only judge,—the light of
Truth Divine,—
The all-revealing light that on our Book of Life will
shine;
For every page will there be shown in vivid living
state,
As acted o'er again, to try our real love or hate.
And if, in that complete review, the good, the true,
the pure,
Be manifestly loved by us, then heavenly bliss is sure!

Thoughts in Trouble.

"God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble."—PSALM xlvi. 1.

NEVER more near than when most sought ;
 Never so close as when the thought
 " Why hast Thou left me ? "—wrings the soul,
 Fearful of losing Thy control.

Never more tender than in pain ;
 Never so loving as when fain
 To cleanse us—even though by fire,
 Thoroughly from each low desire.

Never more bright than when Thy face
 Is hid by clouds of our disgrace ;
 Stronger, the more Thine arm we trust ;
 Kindest when seeming less than just.

Burneth Thy love the same—refused,
 Foolishly slighted, scorned, abused ;
 Deeply though we Thy Spirit grieve,
 " Seventy times seven " wilt Thou forgive !

Seek Thee I will, and closer keep ;
 Trust Thee in trouble as in sleep ;
 Find Thee, in spite of clouds between ;
 Fear Thee, yet on Thy mercy lean.

Turn to Thee more the more my foes
 Threaten and strive to interpose ;
 Refuge and strong Deliverer Thou !—
 Helper of old—so present now !

Clinging to Thine unfailing love,
 How can I fail its bliss to prove ?
 Marching in Thy victorious strength,—
 Victory's mine and Heaven at length.

In Memoriam.

(WM. BRAGGE, Died June 6th, 1884, Aged 61).

THOU saidst, " How short his life—but three-score
 years ! "

My friend, thou art in error ; measure not
 A life like his by seasons ! 'Twas his lot
 'Mid storm and sunshine, joys and bitter tears,
 To work unceasing, almost day and night.

His busy brain and hands and ready tongue
 Scarce knew repose ;—too oft the thought he flung
 Away with laughter ! His was one long fight
 With difficulties many dared not meet.

In east or west, in north or burning south
 He triumphed in so much that as he wrought
 Rich blessings to mankind sprang where his feet
 Had trod ; while wisdom blossomed from his mouth !
 And shall we say of such " His life was short ? "

Temptation and Triumph.*

"Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning."
—Ps. xxx. 5.

MUST all my life, then, be but trouble here ?
Each day new sorrow ? every hour a tear ?
Is there no comfort, then, but hope of death ?—
Shall strife and conflict cease but with my breath ?

Away, ye doubts, alluring to despair !—
Begone, and let me lift mine eyes in prayer !
I cry to Thee, my God ; I trust Thy grace ;
Roll back the clouds, O LORD, that hide Thy face.

Lo ! now a vision in my midnight sky !
Hark ! songs of peace descending from on high ! -
The darkness passes, and the hopeful morn
In tender faith and cheering love is born.

Those frowning hills I feared now radiant glow ;
My pathway clears ; the gloomy valleys glow !
O, wondrous change ! my cross, before in view,
Is now behind, and crowned with glory too !

The sun has risen with healing in his wings ;
From ashes, Beauty ; Joy from mourning springs ;
The joy of sweetest trust in Thee, O LORD ;
The beauty of the glory of Thy Word !

*Another version of these thoughts appeared in former volume.

Ah ! now I feel my Father knows what's best ;
 His loving arm will guard me from the rest :
 My everlasting good His care He makes,
 While gently every earth-born snare He breaks.

Take courage, then, my soul, maintain the fight ;
 Wait patiently for Him who is thy light
 And thy salvation too. The strife shall cease
 When thou art ready to receive His peace.

John Thome.

(Died April, 1883; aged 58.)

ANOTHER well-known form has passed from mortal view ;
 A well-beloved face is veiled by death ;
 A sufferer released from painful breath ;
 A weary, worn-out body changed for one all new !
 God's family on earth, the neighbour-loving few
 On this side Heaven, are fewer now by one !
 Yet we who loved him feel not more alone ;
 For, leaving us, he left behind a golden clue,
 Which, being held, and followed through the maze,
 Thrills us with living evidence of him,
 And guides our willing feet to where he waits ;
 While Love's far reaching eyes, with steady gaze,
 Behold him (though with tears the eyelids swim,)
 Serenely beckoning us within the golden gates.

R^Epaying the Lord.

O L^OR^D! how can I utter forth Thy due and worthy praise?

How feeble is my feeling, and how poor the song I raise!
Thy mercies fall in showers so rich, so constant day by day,

And every one deserving more than all that I can pay!

“Can pay!” were those indeed my words? were those my thoughts indeed?

I start with sudden horror from the scarcely uttered creed.

O, pride of human heart, that dares to think of paying Thee!

O, treacherous delusion, born of hell! begone from me.

Are not Thy mercies, gracious Lord! all gifts, as purely free

As breath of air, or beam of light, or drop of dew can be?
No more can man or angel for Thy smallest mercy pay
Than for a world of wealth, or deepest joy that heaven can sway.

Cease, then, proud heart! to strive for that which cannot be attained;

Yet cease not constant pouring forth of gratitude unfeigned.

Accept His blessings humbly, and be this thy only care,
That, freely as thou hast received, so let all others share.

The Sixtieth Birthday.

AND is my darling sixty years to-day?

Ah, no! It cannot be! Thy beaming eye,
Thy happy face, and still dark hair, deny
That Time at such a speed hath flown away

Since thou and I in early youth first met
Beneath the dawn of mutual love! And yet
It must be true; for figures cannot lie.

It must be true; for have not you and I
Had joys and sorrows quite enough since then
To measure out a life as long again?

O may these years but a beginning prove
To that unending life that grows more pure,
More bright, more sweet (as God's own truth is sure),
For ever and for ever going on in love!

Mine.

I GAVE her my love,
 My life, and my all;
 A gift that's above
 Exchange or recall.

She said, "I am thine!"
 And is she the less
 Eternally mine
 In heavenly dress?

Can death quench the flame
 That comes from on high?
 If worthy its name,
 Can Love ever die?

One morning she slept,
 Awaking no more!
 Her spirit had stept
 Through Death's golden door.

All traces of pain
 Had passed from her face;
 Her youth came again
 Resplendent with grace.

No soul ever sweeter,
 More tender, more true;
 The angels would greet her
 As one they well knew.

Her garment of flesh
 We buried in flowers,
 All fragrant and fresh
 As her newly-found powers.

I saw through the gates
 Her beautiful home,
 And I know that she waits
 In peace till I come.

I look in my heart,—
 Ah! contrast how mean!
 Yet death will not part
 Where love lies between.

Each day will I strive
 More like her to grow,
 And cherish alive
 Affection's pure glow.

God giving me power,
 I'll faithful remain
 Till He points the hour
 To join her again.

He knows what is best;
 I will not repine!
 I wait for the rest:
 I know she is MINE.

October, 1885.

Grandmama's Snowdrops.

(March 5th, 1886.)

THE year lay sadly listening
 To Autumn's dying breath,
 When she, so ripe, was gathered
 To higher life, through death.

She, the dear loving Grandma,
 No longer by us seen,
 But never once forgotten
 Where once her love had been.

And now March winds are sweeping
 With frost white wings around,
 While a snowy mantle covers
 The weary winter ground.

I'm in my little study,
 Away from noisy feet;
 Her portrait stands before me,
 Close by her own old seat.

A little maiden enters,
 Whose nobly beaming eyes,
 And hands concealed behind her,
 Betoken some "surprise."

I leave the spot a moment,
 When, to me, unaware,
 A tiny vase of flowers
 Is placed by someone there!

Two lovely open snowdrops,
 With ivy leaves entwined,—
 In front a scrap of paper,
 "From Hilda," pencil signed!

These precious spring-tide offerings—
 The first ones she could see,
 Were sought by that sweet grandchild
 For grandmama and me!

One was for her in Heaven,
 And one for me below ;
 Both placed before her portrait
 In loving memory so !

And here, while I am writing,
 They look at me and smile ;
 Their fair white lips seem saying,
 "Wait patiently awhile.

"Heed not old age's winter ;
 "Heed not the grave's decay ;
 "Soon comes another summer,
 "Yes, and a fadeless day."

Thus, messages of comfort
 Are brought to my poor heart,
 Alike by child and flower,
 Though hidden tears may start.

Grandmama's Snowdrops.

(February 19th, 1887.)

SEE, the earliest opened snowdrops
 Once again the darlings bring,
 Bright memorials of her fondness
 For the lengthening days of Spring.

Thoughts of Grandma fill their bosoms
 As they seek the year's first bloom,
 Glimpse of Nature's resurrection—
 Type of life beyond the tomb !

Snowdrops gathered in her corner,
 Quiet place of sheltered rest ;
 Happily by her own hand planted
 In the moss her feet had pressed.

Snowdrops twined around with ivy,
 Purest white with evergreen ;
 Emblems eloquent and lovely
 Of the thought and love they mean.

Winter passing—Spring advancing—
 Steal along, and year by year
 Bring us nearer to that summer
 Where celestial flowers appear ;

Nearer to the sweet reunion
 Of the married heart and hand,
 In the home of peace eternal,
 In the longed-for heavenly land.

Grandmama's Snowdrops.

(February 15th, 1889.)

YET once again thy welcome greeting,
O Snowdrop fair!

To tell of Winter's slow retreating
And Spring's soft air.

Thou comest with the year's unfolding—
The babe's first smile;

Thy delicate hand the promise holding
Of Summer's while.

I bless thee for thy pure white petals,
Curved with such grace;

Earth hath no gem, no precious metals,
Matching thy face!

Can I not even hear thee singing
With gentle note,

As from thy sheltered nest upspringing
Swells thy clear throat?

Sing on! mount up to heaven's border!
Tell her I love

In love I wait our Father's order
“Join her above.”

The Heart.

"The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?" —JER. xvii. 9.

M H, thou deceitful heart! I hear thee say
 To me, so softly, "See, how good you are,
 How meek, how gentle, and more clever far
 Than some around who shine with honour's ray!"
 Spell-bound, I listen to thy pleasant lay,
 Till startled Conscience speaks and bids me bar
 Thy veiled comparisons, that mock and mar
 All true humility. In quick dismay
 I turn, O Lord! to Thee for power and grace
 To trample on the foe that thus assails
 With treacherous suggestions—power to slay
 The serpent ere his poisoned stroke avails.
 "Lord, help! Deliver me," I instant pray:
 Thou hearest, and I rest in Thine embrace.

Harvest Thanksgiving.

O GRACIOUS Giver of due food to all ;
 Great Husbandman of universal fields
 In earth and sea and air ; to whom each yields
 Its treasures at the season's smiling call ;
 Maker of Heaven and Earth, accept the praise
 That every living thing to Thee doth raise !
 Creator, Thou, of this my mental earth,
 And Sower, Thou, of wisdom's heavenly seeds—
 Meant in Thy love to bring forth gentle deeds,—
 To Thee all blessed fruitage owes its birth !
 LORD, ripen in me fields of full ear'd corn ;
 And let Thy sunshine fill with juice my vine ;
 Then send Thine angels in the harvest morn
 To garner all within Thy store divine !

First Centenary

Of New Church Organization, December 5th, 1883.

A CENTURY!—how long a time it seems!
A hundred years! Although the life of man
May bridge it o'er, no memory can span
Its limits—lost in far-off misty dreams!
'Tis only to the child that tiny streams
 Appear like rivers, long and deep and wide;
 And thus by puny man a century's tide
Is thought an ocean, with its distant gleams.
Not so to Him in whose all-reaching sight
 “ A thousand years are but as yesterday.”
His Church moves as in His own love and light;
 And future ages, looking back, shall say,
How small a part a century forms in His great plan,
Who is Jehovah-Jesus, LORD of all, God-Man!

Non Nobis Domine.

" Not unto us, O Lord ! "—PSALM CXV. 1.

DELIVER me, O Lord ! from vain conceit ;
 From looking on my work as MINE indeed ;
 From anxious thought, " How will the work proceed
 When I am gone ? who can my plans complete ? "
 Far rather should my heart with gladness beat
 To know the purpose of Thy love had need
 Of my poor services, and so did lead
 My thought, my will, my strength Thy wish to meet.
 I bow my head, and at Thy footstool fall,
 Acknowledging that Thou art All in all !
 Henceforth, no glory mine, but Thine alone ;
 My share is just to bring it to Thy throne.
 So let my constant, inmost effort be
 To think and feel " Non nobis, Domine " !

Birthday Thoughts.

1887.

[N just four years—should I remain so long—
I reach the limit of the Psalmist's span,
The ancient average of life for man !
Methinks that I shall raise a joyful song
On parting from this body, once so strong
And vigorous, but now grown weaker than
Some old machine—one that no longer can
Its purpose serve—to join the unseen throng !
Yea, neither would I wish for longer stay,
If called to-night or whensoever else !
So, patiently I'd bear a lengthened bond,
If such be mine ! Come when death will *that* day
Will be the best ! The voice that calls me tells
Of life, reunion, and bliss beyond !

Who shall be next?

WHO shall be next?

What guides the shaft that seems
Thus shot by Fate? It is not aimed at Age
Alone, but strikes down Youth alike with Sage;
And Folly, running after bubble dreams!
Sometimes the weak ones last
With powers that puzzle science; while the strong
And hearty, who might fairly count on long
Sojournment here, are withered by death's blast.

Who shall be next?

Shall Piety outlive
The sinner? or, shall Holiness be sure
Of longer years than scoffers may endure?
Ah, no! Not yet is this God's will to give!
In mercy all is dark
Beyond the instant now! To mortal eyes
Omniscience, hand on lip, supplies
No hint of who dies next,—no sign or mark.

Who shall be next?

None but a fool were glad
To read seal'd orders given by his king
Before the time and place due right should bring!
Such wish were treason, and bespeaks him mad.
Ah, rather let me pray,
“LORD, hide it from me! Let me never know!
Draw not the veil until my time to go
Is close at hand! I will not ask to stay!”

Christmas Card Verses, 1884.

Accompanied by a sketch of a landscape with an Old Water Mill.

HOW swift seasons glide—
Years roll along !

Not many more may some of us abide
These scenes among !

But just as this old mill,
Worn out and grey,
Retains a quiet mossy beauty still
In its own way,

So, let us hope, the page
Of life's long scroll
May shed some brightness on advancing age,
And light its goal !

These wheels no more go round,—
The stream is gone ;
Yet just across yon river corn is ground,
And work goes on.

So, when our task is done
This side death's river,
A nobler work, we trust, shall be begun
THERE, ending never.

Christmas Card Verses, 1885.

Accompanied by a sketch of a ravine and river spanned by an ivy-covered Bridge.

A RAVINE bridge,—and just as this unites
 Two sever'd points,—two river-cloven heights
 That else in parted pain
 Must still remain;

So let this bridge, poor though the emblem be,
 Convey affection over land and sea,
 All obstacles above,—
 To those we love.

Over this bridge sweet memories of "lang syne,"
 And hopes and fervent prayers for thee and thine,
 Rush on like crowds of friends,
 With speed love lends!

Love's precious bridge, of which one foot doth stand
 Upon the confines of the spirit-land,
 That those we see no more
 May thus pass o'er.

So, by our bridge, in spirit, see, we come
 To greet you once again in your own home,
 With blessing-laden rhyme,
 This Christmas time!

Christmas Card Verses, 1886.

Accompanied by a marine sketch, with remains of wreck on the shore; entitled "THE VOYAGE OF LIFE."

ONE single voyage, o'er
 A path unknown before,
 Where I am captain, aye, and owner too,
 Of ship and cargo,—free to choose my crew.
 But ready to my hand
 Both chart and compass stand ;
 God-given guides, with which, by constant care,
 All risk of wreckage I may humbly dare !

What though no power I find
 The wind or wave to bind,
 Though called to self-denial night and day,
 The LORD gives faith and hope to cheer my way !
 The voyage safely o'er,
 I then may count my store ;
 Exchange my life-long labours for sweet rest
 In heavenly mansions, homes for ever blest !

Christmas Card Verses written for 1887.

Intended to accompany a sketch of sunset at sea, which, owing to illness, was not carried out.

WITH this I send my last of Christmas cards,
 But not of kindest wishes true and fast ;
 These will be cherished long as life shall last ;
 Those must be left to younger hands and bards.

At sunset—looking on the ocean—Hope regards
 Its moving colours on the waters massed
 As prophets of to-morrow, foregleams cast
 Upon the mystery of life Time guards !

That morrow comes ! to-day will soon be past !
 And I would wish this messenger to bring
 Great store of precious thoughts and feelings sweet
 (They cannot be too rich, too warm, too vast) ;
 So that to these fond memory may cling,
 While faith looks forward till again we meet.

Christmas Card Verses, 1888.

Accompanied by a sketch of Cornish coast; evening effect.

YES! just beyond the darkness lies the dawn;
 Behind the winter smiles the new spring morn;
 And after death is our true living home,
 To which this life is but an ante-room.
 Beyond! above! we fix the steadfast eye,
 Yet prize each moment as the hours rolls by.

LORD, send it so that we begin to-day
 A nobler progress on our heavenward way.
 Should years be granted us, LORD also send
 That each may on a higher level end:
 For why are years or months or moments given
 But to provide for better states in heaven?
 For this we wish you many bright new years,
 With still increasing joy as each appears.

A Christmas Card and its Sequel.

A literary gentleman, (Mr. H. S. P.,) in a large Midland town, sent to his intimate friends as a Christmas card the poem given first below, " Flying, ever flying." One of those friends, (J. B.,) admiring the verses, but regretting a certain tone of sadness in them and their seeming want of bright hope about the future, took them for a model as to accent and rhymes, but tried to fill his copy with a more cheerful view of this passing life, and a more glorious anticipation of that real life to which the present is but an entrance.

This re-modelled copy he sent to the author of the poem. By return of post came an acknowledgment in the form of a Parable. To this J. B. replied in another Parable. A brief letter from the original writer concluded this interesting correspondence, the perusal of which we doubt not will be acceptable to our readers.

CHRISTMAS, 1884.

FLYING, ever flying,—

How the hours flit past us on the wing.

Sighing, ever sighing,—

How the wintry winds behind them fling

All the ruined splendour of the Spring.

Hours and days and seasons ever fleeting,

Speed them to the sea that has no shore.

Time its olden story keeps repeating,

And the pulse of Life is beating, beating ;—

But the past—

Returns no more, no more.

Dying, ever dying,—
 Thus before the dawning of the day,—
 Would but all the earthly cares that harass
 And the earthly failings that embarrass,
 Pass away,—away !
 Ring, ye Christmas bells, and in your ringing
 Make us hear the Choir Angelic singing
 Happy news of yore.
 Ring us back the heavenly song again ;—
 God be glorified—and unto men
 Peace,—
 For evermore.

H. S. P.

CHRISTMAS, 1884.

(An impromptu imitation of the preceding verses.)

FLYING, ever flying ;—
 Thank the Lord that time is on the wing !
 Sighing, gently sighing,
 Hope looks onward, as the dark clouds fling
 Shadows o'er the prospect of the Spring ;
 Spring, that's ever into Summer fleeting,—
 Summer like a sea that has no shore !
 Time may pass, its worn-out tales repeating ;
 But the pulse of Life, for ever beating,
 Bids me look
 To Life, when Time's no more !

Dying, ever dying !
 Yes ! To waken where an endless day,
 Free from all the earthly cares that harass
 And the earthly failings that embarrass,
 Never fades away !
 Ring, ye Christmas bells, and in your ringing
 Make us hear the Choir Angelic singing,
 As through Heaven's wide door,
 This sweet message, over and again,
 God was Flesh, to bring to dying men
 Life,—
 For evermore !

J. B.

A PARABLE FROM THE TALMUD

(OR ELSEWHERE).

THERE lived in Jerusalem in the time when Rabbi Ben Martineau ruled the city a poor coppersmith, whose living lay in the making of pots and pans and vessels for the use of them of low degree. And this man honored them that wrought in nobler metals, and that made vessels for the house of the Lord, and jewels for kings, and rings for the hands of the wives of kings.

And he said, I will make a ring after the fashion in which my hands can fashion it, and I will send it unto the chief goldsmith of Jerusalem ; for thus should they do that would be honored by them that are their brethren, but know not the secrets of their craft. And he did so.

Now the chief goldsmith was a wise man, and of them to whom the wisdom of the ancients had come down. And he said, I also will work upon the ring of this man that honoreth me ; and he worked upon it, and sent it again to the coppersmith. And, behold, the ring was gold !

And the coppersmith said, the ring I made was copper, for indeed I work in no other metal, and now it cometh back to me, and lo! it is gold. And he was ashamed, and sat in sackcloth and ashes.

And as he sat, he saw in a vision a spirit, and the spirit said unto him, wherefore mournest thou? And he said; I am ashamed, for the ring which I fashioned in copper, behold, it has come back to me gold, and I know not to work in gold. And the spirit said, from whence cometh gold, and from whence cometh copper? And the man said—from the Lord. And the spirit answered him, He giveth unto His servant gold, and unto thee He giveth copper. He knoweth all things. Work thou according unto the skill, and according unto the metal that is given unto thee, and trouble not thyself as to the rest.

And the coppersmith took up his hammer, and was comforted, and wrought at his pots and pans.

H. S. P.

ANOTHER PARABLE

(IN REPLY TO THE ABOVE).

Now the coppersmith was a man who in all things tried to serve his neighbour, not thinking so much of his own profit as of the real use and excellence of his wares. Hence he was honored by the trust and esteem of all who knew him. Yet, with all, he was not of a conceited spirit, but humbly referred the praises of men ever upwards to the Lord. For, said he, is it not written in the book of our sages, "It is God that worketh in us both to will and to do of His good pleasure?"

So he continued usefully working for many years.

At last, one night, being unusually weary, a curious sleep fell upon him; so soft, so peaceful! Never had he slept so delightfully before! Slowly he awoke. Looking around him in the somewhat strange light that filled the house, lo! it seemed that all his copper pots and vessels were turned to gold! Scarce knowing whether he were really awake or still dreaming, and questioning with himself, he saw

standing near, a beautiful youth, who with a sweet smile and musical voice answered the unspoken thoughts of the coppersmith, thus ;— “Yes, they are of pure gold.” “Yes, they are all yours,—given you by our Father in exchange for those of copper.” “Why so? Because you have worked unselfishly for the good of others; and with us here, the love of the neighbour is acknowledged as in itself love to the Lord. Therefore, all your copper is here turned to gold.”

Being much amazed at all this, and looking intently into the face of his informant, as if still seeking further explanation, the youth pointed to the walls of the room, upon one of which appeared in letters of cerulean blue these words: “Inasmuch as ye have done it unto the least of these My brethren, ye have done it unto ME.” And on the other side were also these in scarlet and gold: “Arise, shine, for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee.” “I the Lord am thy Saviour, and thy Redeemer, the Mighty One of Jacob.” “For copper I will bring gold, and for iron I will bring silver, and for wood copper, and for stones iron.” “Thou shalt call thy walls Salvation, and thy gates Praise.”

Then the coppersmith, filled with profound humility, gratitude and joy, bowed himself to the ground, and gave thanks to the Lord.

J. B.

In reply came a note saying: “You have carried my poor little Parable into a region so high, and invested it with a thought so happy, that I must leave it there. It would be but presumption to attempt to carry it further, and I can but hope and pray that in God’s good time it may prove in some measure true. Whenever this may be, none will know better than the poor coppersmith that the gold will be none of his,—save by pure gift.”

Musing.

"While I was musing the fire burned;
Then spake I with my tongue."

Ps. xxxix. 3.

MY darling one, my Angel wife, my own and only love,
Come near me; I can talk to thee, though in the world above!
Ah, yes! though I no answer get as heard by outward ears,
I see and hear thee,—both,—yet only as in by-gone years.
All vanish'd are the lineaments of weakness, care, and pain;
The marks of creeping age are changed for happy youth again!
As then, thy nodding curls of gold, thy bright expressive glance,
They speak to me and answer me in vivid wakeful trance.

I see thou art my wife! and yet, what wondrous
change of dress!

No words can half describe its soft ethereal loveliness;
Of shining white, with shimmering tints of every
tender hue,

From roseate flush, through golden green to pure
cerulean blue:

Robes, woven of thine own bright thoughts, of sweet
affection born,

Like tissued clouds of Heav'n that spring from genial
summer morn;

No black! for thou art now where twilight turns to
new-born day

Without dark night:—where sorrow, sighs, and
mourning flee away.

O blessed Faith, to know that though I'm still so far
from Heaven,

I'm not too far to send thee holy kisses, many a seven!
The three for Truth, the four for Good; the four
and three in one,

All circled by the living breath,—the sphere of love
alone!

I seem to hold thy hand, with answering fingers, still
in mine,

As I have done these forty years, since all of mine
was thine.

And I welcome to my heart, like doves, each
winged thought that flies

At opening of thy lovely lips, or look from out thine
eyes.

My darling one, my Angel wife, it may not be for long
That I shall have to wait and hear but echoes of thy
song!

I'm close beside the 'river' now; near, on the
other side

I see the Golden City with its portals open wide.
But though an ocean roll between, the Bridge of Love
can span

From shore to shore, from world to world, from God
Himself to man!

And who shall say, in moments sweet of conscious
ecstasy,

My darling wife shall not come o'er that Bridge of
Love to me!

Adieu and Revoir.

[T is just a year; but it seems like only a day
 Since my darling wife from my side was taken
 away—

Away from my sight, from her dearly loved garden home,
 But never away from my heart's inmost temple dome!

It is there, unheard and unseen, we constantly meet;
 And there, by ourselves, we hold hallowing converse
 sweet.

Would I bring her back, if I could, to this weary world?
 Ah no! God forbid! Let the thought from its throne
 be hurled.

Would I go to her? Do I look with joy to the time?
 Ah, yes! but I wait! Impatience were almost a crime.

“Day by day.” Just so! O Lord! make me quietly
 wait

Till fulness of time shall bring ripeness of heavenly
 state.

I go to her grave; but I carry no floral wreath
 To wither and die like the dust that lies underneath;
 Nor is it of Death that I dream while I linger there,
 But only of Life, in its aspects lovely and fair.

So the thought “Adieu” is transformed, amid
 radiance bright,

Into sure “Revoir” in eternal love and light.

October 23rd, 1886.

Sleep.

SLEEP! quiet, solemn, mighty sleep!

More mighty than a river deep,

More silent than its flow!

Who can describe thy wondrous power,

Resistless in its proper hour,

To man and beast, to bird and flower,—

To all, wide heaven below!

Mysterious influence! Whence art thou?

If governed, say by whom or how?

Not to be bought or sold!

Unbidden coming, and unseen,

Yet welcome both to serf and queen;

To rich or poor,—to great or mean,

More precious far than gold!

Yea, time and space both disappear,

When thy serene approach is near—

The wanderer is at home!

The lover with his destin'd bride,—

The sailor by his ingle side,—

The traveller, though seas divide,

To rest again has come.

Benign physician ! without fee !
 All seek thy magic ministry,
 From birth right on to grave !
 Thy medicine mitigates all pain,
 And cures where other help is vain ;
 Thou only canst the troubled brain
 From utter ruin save !

Refresher of the weary limb,
 Refilling daily to its brim
 The goblet of our life !
 Renewing strength at every pore,
 Repairing waste from unseen store,
 And kindly helping evermore
 To banish grief and strife.

With step of quick but noiseless fall
 Thou art, in God's great hospital,
 The never weary nurse !
 Thy presence sheds the dew of peace
 By services that never cease ;
 Nor dost thou ask nor take increase
 Of wealth from any purse.

Within the circle of thy charm
 All men are equal ! No alarm
 Is felt by king or peer !
 So sweet the change that levels all,
 So soft thy wonder working thrall,
 That every class alike will fall
 Beneath it without fear !

Thou comest in the guise of death—
 His image thou, except that breath
 And beating heart hold on.
 And we will think of both as friends ;
 For death is but a sleep God sends
 To lead to day that never ends,
 When pulse and breath are gone !

So, if our wondrous slumber shows
 A glimpse of death ; it also glows
 With rosy promise rife !
 It tells us every opening day,
 That MAN shall never pass away,
 But only rise from death's decay
 To higher, nobler life !

Thus grown familiar with his face,
 We trust by help of God's good grace,
 To fear His touch no more
 Than now we fear repose at night ;
 But so to live that Time's quick flight
 May fit us for the love and light
 Beyond Death's golden door !

LORD, when we nightly sink to sleep,
 Give us to know that Thou dost keep
 Each soul within Thy care !
 And whether waking once again
 To this world's duty and its pain,
 Or into Life beyond ; O deign
 Our hearts in peace prepare !

Memory.

WHAT slender threads connect
The memories of former things with now !
What trifling points direct

The lightning flash of thought ! Who knoweth how ?
Forgotten odours of old-fashioned flowers,—
Quaint phrases, passed away,
Will call to mind with more than magic powers
The things of childhood's day.

Where is the hidden mine
From which the golden grains come rolling down
Time's river-flood, and shine
Upon its sands, by sunny memories shown ?
Where do our old affections rest asleep,
Our old thoughts dreamless lie,
Till some unbidden charmer makes them leap
To living ecstasy ?

In meditative mood,
One afternoon, I slowly walked along
A lane beside the wood !
Some rustic swain piped forth an old-time song !
At once I flew back fifty years or so ;
For in that antique strain
I heard the merry tones and silver flow
Of mother's voice again !

A princely mansion stands
 In gardens rich, and full of fairest flowers ;—
 Delight with open hands
 Offers beguilement for the passing hours !
 Yet even here, amid such scenes, I find
 Visions of boyhood come ;—
 A modest bush, white crested, brings to mind
 The privet-hedge of “ home.”

Sometimes a face, unknown,
 Will startle us to thoughts and scenes long past !
 A saying, years outgrown,
 Will bring up, like a dredging-net well cast,
 Our school-days, playtimes, hidden life of yore,
 All from the lowest deeps !
 For deeds die not, but lie in secret store,
 Like treasure ocean keeps.

We say—“ Ah, that recalls ! ”
 And so it does ! But how ? A spider’s thread
 Between two distant walls
 Gives instant notice of the fly’s light tread !
 But what are these quick wires of memory
 To every sense supplied,—
 That loving, living pictures travel by,
 Though Time and Space divide ?

’Tis Memory’s golden chain
 That binds our life in one, each age to all,
 God’s gift for joy—not pain ;
 And untold blessings lie in its sweet thrall !

For grief soon sleeps, and pain, however keen,
 Like mist soon fades away ;
 But joys live on, whatever comes between,
 And bloom to endless day !

What an amazing dower
 Hath man in this ; for, like another sense
 Acting by its own power,
 It stirs the rest in fashion so intense
 That sight, taste, sound, and subtle odours too
 Come back in busy swarms,
 Whose every feature, quality, and hue
 Stand drest in their old forms !

O how I long to trace
 The weaving of this two-world history
 That so doth interlace
 Our lives, unconscious of the mystery !
 Patience ! Ere long the problem may be plain ;
 Though still with wonders rife,
 How buried thoughts can be revived again,
 And dead loves called to life !

A Ripe Old Age.

I SING the praise of nobly growing old!
 A ripe old age
 Is surely gage
 For music grand and bold
 In honor of the Sage!

No poor half-hearted, timid sort of tone
 Shall here be heard,—
 No minor third,
 But royal notes alone,
 And every heart be stirred.

The grandest and the noblest thing I know
 Is human life . . .
 Filled up, and rife
 With health,—its peaceful brow
 Bearing no trace of strife.

A glorious memory of seventy years
 Or, may be, more,
 With witty store
 Of quips, that like sharp shears,
 Cut well, but never bore.

A tender heart that feels for others' woe,—
 An aspect grand,
 With open hand,
 That where true sorrows flow,
 The plea will not withstand.

See where the old man's counsel Folly needs ;—
 What ready thought
 With wisdom fraught
 Directing straight to deeds,
 May surely there be sought.

And as his days were all to duty given,
 Death drawing near
 Brings him no fear,—
 'Tis but the gate to heaven,
 Where crowning joys appear.

But follow him in thought beyond the gate :
 How blest and bright
 With love and light
 Is now his happy state,—
 Perpetual youth his right.

Most noble such a life and such a man !
 May you and I
 Live so, and die
 Like him, on God's own plan,
 Which joins the earth and sky.

Rivers and Lives.

FROM hidden depths and secret springs
 Afar on mountain height,
 Peeps forth the tiny stream that brings
 Such joy and blessings bright.

By many a wayward bend and turn
 It takes its onward course,
 O'er placid sand or stony burn,
 With ever growing force.

No two alike,—or small, or great,
 Though each resembles all ;
 And every one by devious fate
 Into the sea must fall.

Some vanish soon like infant smiles ;
 Some ripple on like youth ;
 Some broaden o'er a thousand miles ;
 Yet all must die, forsooth.

But is the river dead ? Ah, no !
 The ocean but receives
 The weary soil-stained overflow !—
 The sparkling river lives !

It lives, and lives, because its Source
 Fails not,—though channels change ;
 A thousand things divert its course,
 But nothing stops its range.

Bereavement and Consolation.

L. C., Aged 20.

FROM child to maidenhood she came
 A gentle soul in fragile frame,
 Winning the love of all she knew,
 Then suddenly bade all adieu !
 Adieu to this world, not adieu to love ;
 That follows her ; she moves in it above.

She died like day eclipsed at noon,
 Like joy cut short by sudden swoon ;
 A song half sung, a cadence sweet
 Of melody left incomplete ;
 And yet to inward sense the song goes on ;
 The joy revives ; the shadow leaves the sun !

A perfect blossom pink and white ;
 So promising, so rare and bright ;
 Glowing beneath the sun to-day,
 To-morrow, wholly passed away.
 Away from lower fields and our dull eyes,
 To bloom anew where life all death defies.

A broken bough, a gathered flower,
 Fruit fallen ere the red ripe hour,
 A column shaken to the ground
 Before its stately shaft was crowned :
 But crowned in golden glory it shall be
 With angel love in immortality.

A plan prophetic unfulfilled,
 Too beautiful for man to build ;
 An artist's dream, that dreamlike, still
 Evades his utmost waking skill :
 Too beautiful for man to build on earth ;
 But not for heaven, where beauty hath its birth.

A poem opening out so fair,
 But only half its pages there ;
 A ring-dove flying nestward, met
 By fatal mesh of fowler's net :
 The other pages, and by far the best,
 Shall there unfold ; the dove shall find her nest.

So sweet—a rose without a thorn !
 So fair—a cloud of summer morn !
 So young—a lamb of early spring !
 So pure—almost a heavenly thing !
 Yet she, our tender lamb, our rose so fair,
 Lives in new innocence—new fragrance there !

Let stars that watch her tomb by night
 Shed o'er it tears of dewy light !
 Let balmy wind and plashing wave
 Sing requiems around her grave !
 But we will raise our thoughts above the sod,
 To see her happy in the arms of God.

Unbroken Love !

TO-DAY, three years have flown since she and I
 Bade each the other for this world "good bye"!
 Good bye for earth—for time, or long or short;
 Good bye till death re-union shall have brought;
 For that which death divides death re-unites,
 Having no power to quench the soul's delights!

Three years to-day! Of these the first was spent
 In quiet grief—in loving sad lament;
 The second, clearer faith lit up with joy;
 The third with active deeds made rich alloy;
 And now, O LORD, upon this threefold shrine
 I lay, as due to Thee, all good of mine.

LORD, send it so, that I begin to-day
 A nobler progress in my heavenward way.
 Should years be granted me, LORD, also send
 That each may on a higher level end;
 For why are years, or months, or moments given,
 But to provide for higher states in heaven?

Be with me, darling mine! as in the past;
 Attend and guard my steps while life shall last.
 Unseen, but not unfelt, thy touch shall be
 The secret spring of better things in me!
 So then, alike I'll welcome life or death;
 Be life for years, or but a single breath!

October 23rd, 1888.

Manna?

(EXODUS XVI. 15).

THIS SPRING 'TIS NEARLY FORTY YEARS
 SINCE WHAT I NOW RELATE TOOK PLACE :
 I SEE IT ALL TO-DAY THROUGH HEAVY TEARS ;
 FOR SHE WHOSE LOVE SUCH MEMORY ENDEARS
 HAS NOT LONG PASSED AWAY
 TO TEARLESS ENDLESS DAY !
 YET SHE SEEMS PRESENT WHILE I THUS RETRACE
 THESE LINES, THAT TIME IS POWERLESS TO EFFACE !

Some eighteen months had passed since she and I
 Were solemnly engaged as lovers true,
 And life was bright with joy,—days swifty flew,
 As swallows wing their way through summer sky.

One morning, after sweet refreshing sleep,—
 Soon as the sun threw shadows on the lawn,
 I lay in wakeful peace, and watched the dawn,
 Noting its changeful hues serene and deep.

Yes, perfectly awake, and everything
 Was clear and bright as noon ! There as I lay
 An unseen visitor in unknown way
 Placed in my hand a rich gold signet ring !

I did not start or wonder at the gift,
 But marvelled at its surface, carved with skill
 Most exquisite. And thus I pondered till
 I saw its shield of lazuli uplift !

Beneath, in crystal box, were two small locks of hair :
 One black, the other of light auburn tone ;
 These, it was told me, were as if our own,
 And held a warning and a promise fair.

If that our married lives were true and right,
 The auburn would so rich and golden grow
 As thought could not conceive, or this world know ;—
 The dark would vanish utterly from sight.

But if unhappily true marriage love
 Should fail between us, mine would be the blame ;
 The dark would soon grow grey and fade in shame ;
 The other leave me for the world above.

The lapis lid then closed ! Lo ! now behold,
 What hitherto was not revealed to sight !
 Upon, yet in the stone there shone a light
 Which seemed some lovely features to enfold.

More clear, more vividly alive it grew !
 Oh ! joy,—it was her face,—my darling one ;
 A living likeness from the heavenly sun,
 With every tint of color, pure and true !

So small, so absolutely perfect ! Let
 Me even say more beautiful than she !
 Around her head a wreath of roses see !
 Above the shield is now a coronet !

Upon her neck in richest curls of gold
 The hair hung down in shining loveliness ;
 Her soft grey eyes o'erflowed with tenderness,
 And every feature seemed of heavenly mould.

How shall I tell the sweet expression there ?
 Her lips were very love itself in form ;
 And all the countenance alive and warm
 With angel grace unutterably fair.

And, while I gazed in rapture thus profound,
 The thought came like an inward message given,
 That such she would become to me in Heaven,
 If worthy at the last I might be found !

Still looking, wondering, I was deeply moved
 To see the face turn sadly to one side,
 As if some transient pain or grief to hide !
 Was it the thought that she might be less loved ?

A pang of instant terror shook my soul ;
 A dread, lest some day I should cause this pain ;
 When, with redoubled sweetness came again
 The tender full regard of true love's whole !

Ineffable the sense of heavenly bliss,
 Of perfect joy the foretaste then bestowed ;
 In grateful peace and praise my heart o'erflowed
 For visioned promise of a state like this.

The golden ring, the luminous blue stone,
 The locks of hair, the face I might call mine,
 Whose soul and features seemed all but divine,
 Then vanished ! all were in an instant flown !

But never from that blessed morn till now
 Has memory lost the lesson of that hour ;
 Nor whilst I live, the good Lord granting power,
 Shall one point fail of my eternal vow.

AND NOW, AS I REVIEW THE PAST,
 AND NOTE THE MEANING OF EACH LINE
 AS LEADING UP TO EARTHLY JOYS SO VAST,
 AND CROWNING ALL WITH HEAVEN ITSELF AT LAST ;—
 IF SUCH BE GIVEN ME,
 MY HEART WILL KNOW THAT SHE,—
 SHE, AS THE INSTRUMENT OF LOVE DIVINE,—
 AND SHE ALONE,—MY WIFE HAS MADE THEM MINE !

1886.

A Dream.

M H, yes ! It is,—it is her face,
So nobly sweet, so full of grace,
So changeful in its play.

Not fixed, like cameo of stone,
Or painting of one mood alone,
In settled dull array !

But ready from repose to break,
The lip to curl, the tongue to speak,
The brow to gently move,
The cheek to dimple at a thought,
The eyes, with endless meaning fraught,
To tell their tale of love !

Emotions, now o'erspread with shade,
Now gleaming like a sunny glade,
The darling face enfold ;
Or, like a sky that gently grew
From softest grey to tender blue,
But never harsh or cold.

See, now, how earnestly it pleads,
As urging purpose on to deeds,
When selfish ease beguiles ;
With loving words flow anxious tears,
Till hesitation disappears,
And then come cheering smiles

Just so the peaceful southern seas,
Beneath a gentle evening breeze,
 Such varied aspects show,
Of rippling curve by ripples kissed
To rosy tint, and amethyst,
 As tidal currents flow.

A living picture, full and bright :
A photograph by heavenly light,
 In heavenly colors too !
I strive to touch the fairy form,
To press the lips with love so warm—
 What is it dims the view ?

Alas ! it slowly fades away,
And I awake to new-born day
 With all its new-born pains ;
Yet more inspired by this, among
The whirl of outer things, so long
 As memory remains.

“Thy faith hath made thee whole.”

MARK x. 52.

O THOU, the Healer of all soul disease,
 Sight giver, strength restorer, making speak
 The inward dumb, and walk the palsied weak !
 Thy touch—Thy word—Thy look alone decrees
 For all who come in faith, on bended knees,
 Salvation’s health ! I thus would come to seek
 Thy blessed power—Thy gracious help to break
 The bonds of sin, and give my spirit ease !

For Thou, O LORD, art ever “very nigh”—
 Art “in the house,” or “way,” or “passing by :”
 “Come unto Me” is still Thy loving cry !
 Is my soul palsied ? is it deaf or lame ?—
 Or blind, or leprous ? I may trust the same ;
 I shall be healed by faith in Thy great Name !

The Fourth Anniversary.

THIS day, at dawn, four years ago,
 Ere morning-red began to glow,
 She lay with pulse so faint and low,
 Breathing her last unconsciously.

We scarcely knew when life was sped ;
 So gently was her spirit led
 Away from earth ! At last one said—
 “ She’s gone ! ” But O, how peacefully !

Four years,—and I am still left here !
 Four years apart—but yet how near !
 No thought of either grave or bier,
 Only of immortality !

And she ? Hath she still anxious thought
 For loved ones here ? O no ! she’s taught
 Belief that all will there be brought,
 And trusts the LORD implicitly.

Her face—her form ? What changes bright !
 All, all, transfigured in love’s light !
 Oh, for one glimpse—one moment’s sight !
 Be still, my soul ; wait patiently !

October 23rd, 1889.

A Word in Season.

" FRET not thyself because of evil doers ;"

So shall their end be foiled ! To wound, to fret
And slander is their joy. Success but lures
To worse. Christ-like forgive, if not forget
Their puny spite ; for in that state serene
Their worst endeavours all are fruitless seen.

They cannot harm, if thou wilt not be hurt ;
Angelic souls are thus by Heaven begirt !

The MASTER, now, as then in Galilee,

Will give the power on scorpions to tread,
And o'er thine enemies lift up thine head,
If thou but trust in Him implicitly.

Commit thy way to Him, therefore,—Him only fear ;
He will bring all to pass, and make all sweet and clear !

Changes.

THE sea hath its tides from the high to the low ;
The blood hath its circuit and pulses of flow ;
The bosom upheaves and then lies down to rest ;
The light of the sun comes by waves from its breast.

Our life is but motion, one step at a time,
Left to right, alternating, like two bells of chime ;
With each a new scene ; every breath a new life ;
Even peace seems to mingle with something of strife.

The night and the morning complete but a day ;
The moon's gentle changefulness knows no delay ;
The varying seasons, their cold and their heat,
Ever go and return like a pendulum's beat.

And thus we make progress from childhood to man,
With seeming recurrence, yet varying plan ;
Each pulse wears the body ; each tide curves the shore ;
No year like the past one ; no state as before !

Ocean and Science.

A SIMILE.

I.

OCEAN, tremendous ! of measureless power,
 Marching with slow irresistible stride,
 Two steps a day, never failing the hour,
 Swinging thy wonderful pendulum tide.

Ocean, implacable ! deaf to all sorrow,
 Sternly obeying inflexible law ;
 Dealing destruction to-day, yet to-morrow
 Smiling in peace, like a gem without flaw.

Ocean, mysterious ! where is thy birth-place ?
 Rivers increase not thy fathomless deep !
 Higher nor lower the line of thy bright face ;
 How can mere vapors thy balance thus keep ?

Ocean, beneficent ! earth all embracing,
 Breathing soft blessings in moisture and rain ;
 Thine are the streamlets, the land interlacing,—
 Fiords thine arteries, rivers thy veins.

Ocean, all radiant ! rippling on bright sands,
 Gleaming with hues of the opal and pearl ;
 Fields of deep sapphire, with amethyst islands,
 Golden green feather lines fringing each curl.

Ocean, thou food giver ! free, never failing ;
 Earth without thee and thy plentiful yield
 Could not her family nourish, unailing !
 Praise to the harvest of thy liquid field !

Ocean, great highway of commerce for nations !
 Thou dost make possible intercourse grand,—
 Blessings undreamed of in world-wide relations,
 All men enjoying all good from each land !

They that do business on thee, mighty ocean !
 These see the wonderful works of the LORD,
 Wonders of being, of colour, of motion ;—
 Wonders more rare than of forest or sward.

II.

Ocean, true emblem of all human science,
 All earthly knowledge, its uses and gains ;
 Waters of truth in their largest alliance ;
 Mirror art thou of its joys and its pains !

Science, omnipotent, perfect law heeding,—
 Science that blesses wherever it flows ;
 Low though its own life, yet higher life feeding,
 Stirred by each wind of the spirit that blows.

Science, the highway of wisdom's connections !

Science that bears up each doctrinal ship ;
Seeming to part, and yet binding all sections,
God-given, beautiful, wonderful, deep !

Science, great ocean, where uses unnumbered,

Sportive, await human fishermen's nets !

Science, whose shoal thoughts increase unencumbered ;
Each of thy truths a new myriad begets.

Yet in thy pathways such mysteries meet us !

Surely some higher condition shall bring
Light more interior,—teachers to greet us,
Showing the royal road straight to thy King !

May not we hope for some compass (we need one) !

Strong with attraction for heaven's central pole ?
Is there no God-given chart that may lead one
Safely by day or by night to his goal ?

Will not deep love for the good of the neighbour,
Guided by USE as the only true worth,
Find in this ocean new solace for labour,—
Bring from above a new heaven to its earth ?

So, when mere knowledge has grown to perception,

Wisdom from love will all science surpass ;
Light, as if sevenfold will then have direction ;
Man will then stand on the LORD's sea of glass !

Metaphysical Rhymes.

LOVE is not limited by things of earth,
 Nor touched nor bound by place ;
 Affection hath its mystic birth
 Far above earthly space !

Remote, yet near ; diverse, yet seeming like ;
 Discrete and yet inwrought ;
 For human love no steel can strike ;—
 No balance weigh a thought !

And god-like Reason, with its wondrous train
 Of knowledges profound ;
 And freedom—crown of human reign ;—
 These spring not from the ground.

Unlike things earthly, which by gifts grow less,
 These but increase thereby ;
 No limit hath love's power to bless ;
 Therefore it cannot die.

And that wherein these dwell and hold their sway
Must to themselves be kin !
Thoughts have no fellowship with clay ;—
This ends where those begin.

Perfect must be the substance and the form,—
Organic every sense,
Where love and wisdom clear and warm
Wield energies intense !

A spirit body with a spirit soul,—
Such is the human mind !
Heaven-born and nurtured,—heaven its goal,—
For heavenly use designed.

For Love is Life ;—all matter is but dead !
This bone and flesh and skin
Make but an effigy, all said,
Of that which dwells within.

December 25th, 1889.

LO! here another Christmas day!
Have we no message? Must we say
Our last was "last" indeed?
Ah, no! For though so often told,
And though the fashion be so old,
Yet Christmas-tide were far more cold
Without love's word or deed!

A merry Christmas greeting, then;
And many a time and oft again
As years to years succeed;
So, constantly may each one bring
Fresh magic joys, to backward fling
Time's gates, bright pathways opening
That shall to brighter lead!

¶ PART + II. ¶

Miscellaneous Poems.



Three Memories of a Life.

BALLAD.

THERE are three little spots in this island home,
 That I do love
 All others above ;
 And whatever my lot, or wherever I roam,
 More sweet and dear
 Their charms appear !

By the yellow sea-sands, in the soft rich spring,
 'Twas there we met ;
 I see her yet,
 As joyous and bright as a fairy thing !
 Each lost a heart
 Ere we could part !

Golden orchards were ripe in a Devon glade ;
 Blue skies at noon,
 And harvest moon
 Shed blessings upon us, as youth and maid
 Exchanged the vow
 Well kept till now !

A bright little cottage, embosomed in flowers,
Is the third dear place
In memory's grace ;
And the soft sea sands, and the Devon bowers
Seemed there to meet
And be complete !

For a true home of love is the end and crown
Of all that's pure
For aye to endure !
Far better than riches, or rank, or renown ;
A prize, God-given,
Earth's only heaven !

Inconstancy.

FOR three long years or more by gracious ways
 He won her love. Their constant company,
 With many mutual signs, declared that she
 Would be his wife ! So those were happy days !

But yet he never asked nor sought to gain
 The promise of her life, nor vowed his own,
 As lover should when time has fully grown,
 That mutual words should make intentions plain.

All passed as if by both well understood ;
 Yet in her secret soul dark doubts would rise,
 Doubts that would cause hot tears to fill her eyes !
 She quelled them by her pride of maidenhood.

For how could she demand a formal bond ?
 She loved as woman does, with all her heart ;
 And loving so, believed that on his part
 Unspoken words were true, all words beyond.

And there were reasons why (to her it seemed)
 That never of their wedding day he spoke ;
 For times were hard, and all such prudent folk
 Must wait in patience ; so at least she deemed.

Nor could her anxious parents dare to doubt
 That he was honest, faithful, and sincere ;
 For had he not been known for many a year
 As such ? yea, even pious and devout ?

So time went on ! But gossips, whispering, said
 That it were better settled now ; for youth
 Would soon be flown ; and some would add in truth
 That such delay was straining life's thin thread.

And then, it happened, for awhile he went
 Away to friends far distant. There he saw
 A face that struck him, with a mind to draw
 By strong attractions, though on virtue bent.

She was the very soul of honour, too ;
 And had she dreamed, all other things above,
 That he was bound by sacred prior love,
 She would have spurned his smiles with brief adieu.

Again and often thitherward he sped,
 And people wondering still were forced to think
 That he must be on slippery danger's brink ;
 Till open word was soon in public spread.

And then she came on friendly visits, where
 She was escorted,—met in every place
 By him. Yet she so charmed by her sweet grace
 That none to whisper warning word did dare.

While *she* (the first) in torture of dumb pain
 Must see and hear and feel the wicked change ;
 Yea, even offer words of welcome strange
 To one whose happiness must prove her bane.

And soon the wedding day was duly named ;
 The foreign bride, so fair, so good, so sweet,
 Was met ;—O horror ! even *she* must greet
 The innocent usurper, all unblamed.

How dreadful was that time of mental strain !
 Her face grew ashen pale ; her blood scarce ran ;
 No medicine touched her illness ! Death began
 To promise early quittance from her pain.

The sunny southern clime, the mountain side,
 The sea breeze, and the changing city life ;
 The loving sympathy, so rich and rife,
 Of tender hearts ;—all failed, for all were tried.

And thus, in living death she lingered long !
 Her heart was broken ! Yet before she passed
 Came lovely Peace, and lighted to the last
 Her pathway ! Then she heard the angels' song !

The Artist's Soliloquy.

A PICTURE ! How does it grow ?
 Sometimes it flashes to life like a meteor blaze ;
 But oftener, painfully slow ;
 Work I may ; nothing succeeds—opaque or glaze.

The subject sometimes will run
 Out of hand, just at will,—everything right away ;
 The brush and the fancy are one !
 O what a joy for an artist is such a day !

My sketch book,—let it but talk—
 Many a history might from its pages unfold ;
 How I have stopped in my walk,
 Struck by a sky or an outline of headland bold.

I sketch it ! Ah ! but what then ?
 How is it ? why is it ? sitting at work at home
 The feeling won't come again ?
 Paint it I cannot ! I try till it's wearisome.

Again, now ;—see what a change !
Clouds will rush on to the canvas so pleasantly ;
And meadow and mountain range,
River and foliage, leap to life instantly !

No wonder ! All life is so !
Dull and inanimate, most days we scarcely live !
To-morrow,—how, we don't know ;
Brightness and warmth may arise, a new joy to give !

But notice ;—measure it all !
What a proportion of work is but second rate !
The “poor” style hangs like a pall
Over nine-tenths of our doings, by common fate.

Oh ! pictures, though ye are mine,—
Only one panel in ten may bring honour to me ;
The others,—yes, all the nine
Are but the measure of my mediocrity !

Church Stretton.

ONCE more beloved Stretton's church I hail,
And rest beneath her yew tree's quiet shade.

Anon I wander through her fertile vale;
Or turn to right or left in pleasant glade.

What noble outlines rise on either side !

Here, softly rounded ; there, rough crags are seen ;

Here, dark pine woods ; and there bright alps of green ;
While torrents race, or silver streamlets glide !

How fresh and sweet thy heather-perfum'd air ;

No summer day so hot but breezes there

Bring rosy hues to sickly, pallid cheek ;

While tempting walks give vigour to the weak.

Dear Stretton, with thy lesser sisters, two,

All England gives no fairer, lovelier view !

Autumn Sounds.

WHAT is the music that Autumn loves best?
 Rustling of leaves that lie ankle deep
 In the paths of the wood, or piled in a heap,
 Like snow-drift in winter, right up to the breast.

What is the music that Autumn loves best?
 Hum of the winnowing fan all the day
 In the rick-yard, where busy hands carry away
 For the market full bags, at the farmer's behest.

What is the music that Autumn loves best?
 Whir of the pheasant, as rising, alack!
 Too near to escape from the murderous crack
 Of the sportsman's weapon, so close to the nest.

What is the music that Autumn loves best?
 Echoing horn, or the mad "Tally ho,"
 When good scent is found, and gallop they go
 With hounds in full cry, and reynard is pressed.

What is the music that Autumn loves best?

Rattle and whistle of blinding rain,

That falls like a flood down the window pane,
And oozes through crevices facing the west.

What is the music that Autumn loves best?

Blustering wind, so hollow and deep,

That roars round the roof with a rush and a sweep,
And lashes the tree-tops with furious zest;—
All this is the music that Autumn loves best!

Hospital Saturday, March, 1886.

(A Workman's Appeal to his Fellows.)

AH ! who can tell
 Where next the bolt shall fall ?
 It may be your turn, or it may be mine
 To suffer sudden accident, and pine
 For weeks in hospital !
 Ah ! who can tell ?

Thank God, we know
 That when the blow does fall,
 The doors are open,—beds and blessings free,—
 With doctor and with nurse for you or me
 In each great hospital.
 Ah ! this we know !

Is it for *us*
 That noble minded men
 Give time and money, strength and study too,
 To perfect everything that skill can do
 For comforting us then ?
 It *is* for us !

Then *this* we'll do,
(Or hide our heads in shame),—
Give the best earnings of one day's best powers,
Or give the savings of a few short hours
That smoke or beer might claim.
Yes! this we'll do!

And "Brum" shall find
Her rough hard-handed sons
Have hearts that beat in tune with all that's good,
And do their duty too, when understood,
Like soldiers at the guns!
This "Brum" shall find!

Send round the box!
Let it be large and deep!
For though the trade has been so poor this year,
The "boards" and "governors" need have no fear
But we shall faithful keep,
And fill the box!

“When Christmas Comes.”

A STUDY IN MONOTONE.

WHEN Christmas comes, where should I like to go best ?

Being bachelor young, I should like to invest
In a first-class “ return ” to a snug country nest,
Where a welcome by host should be warmly expressed,
And where one that I love, with her bonny hair
tressed—

One of youth, beauty, wit, and of wisdom possessed
Would await me with true lover’s-knot on her breast,
With a squeeze of the hand, and a yet dearer test
Of affection for one just arrived from the West ;
And where after my stay I should not be assessed
At so much “ per day,” but be lodged and be messed
All for love ; and where parting would make all
distressed.

And these are the joys of which I would make quest,
To ramble all day at our own free behest—
Save her own, no ear hearing how she were addressed,
No rude eye to see it when she were caressed ;
No cousin, or brother, or number three pest
Our sweet *tête-à-tête* should one moment infest.

In the morning the blithe Christmas bells should attest
The world's joy at the season that gives the oppressed
A day of relief and a promise more blest.

But after the day, and when night's sable vest
Had curtained the world in its ample folds, lest
One's spirit should droop and one's mind be depressed,
We would raise hearty laughter at each merry jest,
And at mistletoe kisses on blushing cheeks pressed,
And bursts of applause when the riddle was guessed,
And at jovial carol from deep manly chest.

I'd have toasts of the season all given with zest,
'Mid the chattering humour of many a guest,
Surrounding the table with viands well dressed,
So pleasant to eat, if not good to digest ;
And, though nearly teetotal, it must be confessed
I'd have popping of bottles with rich creamy crest,
And over the pipe (those may quit who detest)
A cosy " confab " before going to rest.
Ah, these are the joys that would surely divest
The heart of all cares, howe'er deeply impressed !
And on leaving, these words to be true I'd contest,
That a year may by love in a day be compressed.

❧ PART + III. ☙

Children's Riddle Rhymes,
About Animals, Fruits, and Flowers,
To be asked at Breakfast times,
Or other sociable hours.



Riddle Rhymes.

I.

I WATCH your house by night and day ;
 I drive the skulking thief away ;
 At dinner I wait till you've had your own,
 And thankfully finish the crust and bone.
 Treat me well until the end,
 And I'll remain your faithful friend.
(Guessed at once by both of them).

II.

O H, how silken smooth her coat ;
 Oh, how soft her velvet paw ;
 Leaping, climbing, like a goat ;
 Tiger's teeth and tiger's jaw.
 Yet so fond of gentle touch,
 Making friends of young and old ;
 If caressed and petted much,
 Then at meals she grows too bold.
 Swift her spring and fleet her pace ;
 Bird and chicken, mouse and rat
 Fear her eye and hate her face,
 For her name is

III.

O H dear ! what a curious history's mine ;
 Instead of one life I have lived eight or nine !
 I was born in the water, and yet I can roam
 O'er the meadows and gardens, and feel quite at home.
 At first, like a round spot of jelly I came ;
 Then swam a few days like a grub without name ;
 Then out came two gills, for breathing, 'tis said ;
 Then two little legs ; then a very big head ;
 Then off fell my tail, and of legs I had four ;
 My head was then changed,—I was fishy no more !
 I can jump on the land ; I can swim in the pond ;
 But not in the winter ; for then I am fond
 Of hiding quite still in the mud, as if dead ;
 And all the cold weather I sleep in that bed.
 I am brown, or I'm green, and have beautiful eyes ;
 And Frenchmen my body for food highly prize.
 In the long summer evenings I croak in the bog,
 And now you will guess that my name's Mr.

IV.

W EAKER than ivy, but holding as fast,
 Clinging by tendrils defying the blast ;
 Creeping o'er hedges and trellis and tree ;
 Blessing mankind, and delighting the bee ;
 Loading with fragrance the warm summer air ;
 Sweeter than roses, though never so fair ;
 Yet, unlike the rose that for years will smell on,
 As soon as thou diest thy fragrance is gone !

(Guessed by Hilda at once).

V.

TALL in stature; fleet in pace;
 Every movement marked by grace;
 Docile, minding word or touch;
 Loving those who love me much;
 Working like a real friend,
 Cheerful to the journey's end.
 Black, or white, or brown, or bay;
 Sometimes of a dappled grey.
 Bring me but a bit of bread,
 You may safely stroke my head!

(Guessed instantly by both.)

VI.

O YOU dear little bright-eyed, soft brown thing,
 Climbing the trees with a confident spring;
 Gathering nuts through the long Autumn day
 To hide in holes for the Winter away:
 Making your nest up high in a tree,
 As warm and as soft as a nest can be;
 Keeping at home through the wintry day,
 Excepting a turn when the sunbeams play:
 Curled up so cosily, tail on your back,
 Or else sitting up while your nuts you crack.
 Harmless when wild, but tame you're a pet,
 And doomed all your life in a cage to fret;
 A cage so small that it turns round and round,
 To seem more like running along level ground.
 Your life is so pretty and free in the wood,
 That I'd loose every one from his cage if I could.

VII.

I'M not very large, nor yet very small ;
 And when I am petted I come at a call ;
 My skin has a soft and beautiful fur ;
 I can jump like a cat, but I never could purr.
 When wild, by the hundred in fields we are found,
 In curious villages, under the ground ;
 But when tame, I am happy to make my warm nest
 In a dark dry corner of any old chest.
 I have very long ears that droop o'er my head,
 And a very short tail ;—so that's very soon said !

(Guessed at once by Alan.)

VIII.

A QUADRUPED with long round tail,
 I'm very small and nimble ;
 My head and neck and shoulders too
 Would go into a thimble.

My colour's sometimes perfect white,
 But mostly of grey-brown hues ;
 I often lead a country life,
 Though better liking town views.

My taper nose, sharp eyes, and teeth,
 With cheese are well contented ;
 My food is such as children like ;
 I squeal when I'm tormented.

My human foes set traps for me ;
 But something far more frightful
 Is sly and cruel pussy-cat,
 Whose treatment is so spiteful.

IX.

I COME towards the middle of the warm advancing
Spring,

And I gladden people's hearts when I make the green
woods ring

With my simple well-known song, having only two short
notes,

That everybody imitates, and, imitating, quotes.

I am rather plain in person, and very plainly clad ;
So there's nothing in the look of me to make the people
glad ;

But they welcome me alone for the message that I bring,
That the Winter has departed, and Summer follows
Spring.

X.

I HAVE two pairs of wings, but I am not a bird ;
I cannot sing songs, but yet I am heard ;
Though busily gathering food all the day,
I eat very little, but store much away.

The moor and the forest, the garden and field,
Alike to my searching their sweet treasures yield.
In Summer and Autumn I rise with the sun,
And cheerfully work till the daylight is done.

I am armed with a dart, which I shoot out at those
Who rob my dear home, or who act as my foes ;
But I never attack if in peace left alone ;
I am humble and useful and very well known.

XI.

WE have tongues, yet seldom talk
 We have legs, but rarely walk ;
 We build houses without a roof,
 Because our clothes are waterproof.

Our robes are made of many bits,
 Yet all are smooth and perfect fits ;
 And each part fastened neatly in
 With a smooth and hollow taper-pin.

Our food is varied as can be,
 From each of Nature's kingdoms, three ;
 We float, we dive, we sail and steer
 In thinner seas than water clear.

Land does not convey the notion
 Of our sphere of locomotion !
 We make music without words,
 So you will know our name is

XII.

I'M the very small fruit of a very large tree,
 Whose branches are crookèd as crookèd can be ;
 I'm smooth skinned, and round like a nut, and I match
 In my cup, like the cup to the ball children catch.
 In the Autumn I drop and take root in the fields,
 And may grow into timber that great profit yields.
 I'm rather too bitter for children to eat ;
 But swine like me much and consider me sweet.
 Two vowels, with K spell the name of my tree,
 And one grain of wheat's the correct name for me.

XIII.

*C*HIEFLY by rich folk my taste is known ;

Only in tropical gardens I'm grown,
Each single root throwing one grand cone.

Fragrance and food are in me combined ;

Not any seed in my pulp will you find ;

I bottle my juice in a horny rind.

Ripe, I am tufted with grey green shoots ;

Palate of gourmand my flavour suits,—

Richest and grandest of earth's golden fruits !

Crowning dessert, at the top I shine,

Sure to be present where grandese dine ;

Sum of the beautiful flavours, mine !

XIV.

*D*OWN in cool and shady dells

There I ring my little bells ;

But my music's only clear

To the listening fairy's ear.

Every bell by one green thread

Trembles o'er my mossy bed ;

Hanging like a drop of light,

O, so pretty ; O, so white !

Tall green leaves like soldiers' blades,

Guard when heat or wind invades ;

I have sisters proud and grand,

Far too proud to shake my hand ;

For in shadows deep I hide,

Yet, I am the valley's pride !

XV.

G RINNING and screaming and sly,
 "Mischief incarnate" I'm called;
 Wickedly winking my eye;
 Never revered, though I'm bald.

Pouches in cheeks I possess,
 (Curious cupboards for food),
 Holding a meal, more or less;
 Keeping it, too, fairly good.

Most of my people are brown,
 Some being blue in the face;
 Chained when I live in the town,
 Lest on the roofs I should race.

Tropical forests my home,
 Living on nuts or on fruit;
 Chattering troops we roam;
 Nimble and cunning and cute.

Something like hands I have four;
 Oh, and they are so strong;
 But if I wanted one more,
 Here it is, taper and long.

By it I hang from a tree,
 Swinging from bough to bough;
 Birds are but little more free;
 Surely my name you know now!

XVI.

I WEAR a golden dimpl'd robe ;
 In form I'm like this earthly globe ;
 Alike to nostril, eye, and tongue,
 I'm pleasant both to old and young.

XVII.

ON many a quiet river bend,
 On many a sylvan pool,
 Where drooping ash or willows lend
 Their shadows cool ;

 Within some nook of reedy ground,
 Or on some island green,
 I build my nest, and, curtained round,
 I sit, a queen !

The glory of my great white wings
 Not often I display ;
 My royal form more honour brings
 On watery way.

There, gliding gracefully along,
 And mirrored in the stream,
 I need no charm, or power of song ;
 So fair I seem !

XVIII.

SOMETIMES white and sometimes brown ;
 Seen in country more than town ;
 Fond of water clear and bright ;
 Giving it back to the child's delight.

XIX.

THEY have brought me away from a far distant shore,
 In the warm sunny South I shall never see more !
 Over thousands of miles of blue glittering sea,
 To delight and to serve you have men carried me.

My huge spiral cluster in shops may be seen,
 With stripes of rich brown on a soft golden green ;
 I'm as thick as two thumbs, and as long as your hand,
 With tapering ends, slightly curved, understand.

When grown to perfection I'm lusciously sweet,
 Without pippins or stones,—all but skin fit to eat ;
 My flavour resembles a ripe mealy pear,
 Not so juicy, perhaps, but most excellent fare.

I am placed on the table along with dessert ;
 But if eaten all day I should scarce do you hurt !
 Three syllables long is my soft sounding name,
 Yet but three single letters is all it can claim.

(Guessed by both Children.)

XX.

A GOLDEN velvety brown,
 Mounting up to a taper top ;
 The richer the lower down,
 Where leaves begin, and flowers stop.
 Welcome thy early Spring perfume,
 Beautiful, honest, homely bloom !

XXI.

O ! for the windows at Christmas time,
 Piled up with treasures from many a clime,
 Luscious and varied and sweet and prime !

Some are in boxes, all square and white,
 Packed up in layers so flat and tight,
 Promising many a dinner-delight.

Figs and raisins, in grand array ;—
 But what are these queer things, I pray,
 Quietly stowed in a corner away ?

Wrinkled with age, and yellow and brown,
 Dry looking things of no renown ;
 What is their purpose ? Lift them down !

Long and hard, like a kind of claw ;
 Are they for boiling, or roasting, or raw ?
 Work they will give for a patient jaw ?

Bitter at first,—but just go on
 Munching and chewing, a relish is won,
 Sweeter in taste till the morsel is done !

XXII.

I DO not grow in the common field,
 But in gardens a gracious use I yield ;
 There I am planted in tufted lines
 Of golden green that always shines.
 Little daisy-like flowers I frame ;
 And I frame beds ; now what is my name ?

XXIII.

NOBLE leafage forms my tent ;
 Fair white flowers say, " fruit is meant ; "
 Close to earth my shady bed ;
 First I'm green, then pale, then red.
 When I'm ripe I'm luscious sweet,
 Richer berry none can eat :
 Birds on me a meal will make,—
 Wasp or frog will too partake.
 Water well my spreading root,
 You shall have good crop of fruit !

XXIV.

ONLY southern climes can grow me !
 Gathered fresh, how few have known me !
 Ripe, a purple green my colour ;
 Dried, I fade, grow pale and duller.

 Unlike grapes (but few seeds showing),
 I have hundreds, fit for growing.
 Round the blue Greek Sea I flourish ;
 Millions on my food I nourish !

 Groves of trees with branches curving,
 Plenteous crops are there preserving ;
 Grand large leaves give welcome shelter
 From the sultry noon-day swelter.

 Mine's a harvest, full of blessing,
 All the world my gift caressing !
 By my guessers I've been tasted,
 Eaten up, and nothing wasted !

XXV.

I AM a fruit of the temperate zone ;
 Nearly all over the world I'm known ;
 Formed like a globe, puckered in at each pole,
 With a stalk or a leaf growing out of each hole.

 I'm russet or golden, rosy or green,
 And even sometimes a pale primrose I'm seen ;
 Some of my brothers are clothed in blood-red ;
 And French boys will breakfast on me, with some
 bread.

I have a sister, too, very well known ;
 For where the one lives the other is grown ;
 She is much softer and sweeter than I,
 Slenderer, too, at the end near the sky.

I make a beverage acid and strong ;
 She makes another that's five letters long.
 Guess but the one of us, sister or brother,
 And you'll not be long in guessing the other.

XXVI.

 CLUSTERS of delicate little flowers,
 Covering bushes like snowy bowers,
 Opening full at the end of May,
 Smelling sweeter than new-mown hay !
 Autumn turns us to berries red,
 For birds that rest in our leafy bed.

XXVII.

IN the richest beds of the garden I dwell,
 But wild, in the woods, I am found as well ;
 You ask for my colour ! ah, who can tell,
 For I have fifty !

To the sunbeam I show my delicate shades,
 Closing my cup when the daylight fades,
 Hiding my face, like timid maids—
 And give no giftie.

When the chilly Spring has passed away,
 And Summer is bringing her longest day,
 What fields of purple and white I display !
 I am so thrifty !

Let me take root in a suitable plain,
 The Winter will hide me, but there I remain ;
 And every Summer you'll see me again,
 For I'm not shifty.

XXVIII.

A GOLDEN crown
 On a white head ;
 A mattrass brown,
 With a green bed.

XXIX.

DEAR little fairy-flower, pray who are you
 Hiding so modestly down in the dew ?
 Body so slender, and eyes of sky blue,
 Dear little fairy flower, pray who are you ?

XXX.

I'M a pretty rosette of paper-like shreds,

In lavender greys, or browns, or reds ;

But mostly I like to gladden men's sight

With my glorious robe of perfect white.

Tender yellows and saffron I show,

And varied blends of all I throw.

Fourishing towards the end of the year ;

Blooming my best in November drear.

I smile when I think from Japan I was brought ;

Yet now by the flower-loving world I am sought !

XXXI.

I AM one of Winter's treasures,—

Flora's gift, beloved by all ;

Either head or breast adorning

For the party or the ball !

Purest waxen white my colour,

Or of tender rosy hue ;

Shining leaves of curve most graceful

Hide my swelling buds from view.

What a rich rosette I offer

To the fairest of the fair ;

What a crown of nature's growing

For the beauty of dark hair !

Brought from far Japan or China,

I both warmth and care demand ;

Grateful, then, I bloom profusely,

Growing large and strong and grand.

XXXII.

ON a round green stem, growing ever so tall,
 With leaves that bend in a graceful fall,
 Is a large trumpet mouth, with lips of snow,
 Smiling in peace on all below.

XXXIII.

SCARLET deep, or scarlet light,
 Veined with purple or with white ;
 Delicate pink, or blazing red,
 I display on the garden bed ;
 Buds in clusters hang below,
 Waiting for their time to blow ;
 Large round leaves that lowly lie,
 Showing zones of many a dye !
 Guard me from the wintry hour ;
 All the year besides I'll flower.

(Guessed instantly by Hilda.)

XXXIV.

NEITHER flower, nor shrub, nor tree
 Long could live deprived of me ;
 Yet I'm neither trunk nor root,
 Neither bark, nor branch, nor fruit ;
 Still I am a vital part,—
 Lungs, perhaps, if not the heart.

You will find with wond'ring eyes
 I'm of every form and size ;
 Sometimes tall as tallest man ;
 Sometimes broad as giant's fan ;
 Small sometimes, as grain of seed,
 Yet fulfilling every need !

Wondrous, too, my varied forms :
 Needle-like for mountain storms ;
 Broad and smooth, or prickly edge,
 Arrow-headed, like a wedge ;
 Sometimes smooth as pussy's paw ;
 Sometimes stinging like her claw.

Every tint of colour, too,—
 All but one,—I'm never blue !
 Veined or mottled, I display,
 Brown and yellow, red and grey.
 If I'm pale in early Spring,
 Autumn richer robes will bring.

Yet one other curious thing—
 To my mother's arm I cling,
 Never loosing, night or day ;
 If I did, my life would pay.
 Yet my life is not so dear—
 Countless millions die each year !

How I love the gentle rain,
 Clearing every dusty stain,
 And the playful breezes, too,
 Shaking hands the whole day through.
 Now you know my history well ;
 Surely you my name can tell.

XXXV.

I AM a beautiful crimson bell,
 Lovely to see, but having no smell,
 Hanging by such a delicate string
 That every breeze my note can ring.
 Strange, however, as it may appear,
 No one ever my sound did hear !
 In my delicate bower of green
 Hundreds of such pretty bells are seen ;
 Sometimes purple, or veined with white,—
 Oh ! my bower is a charming sight !

(Hilda guessed this instantly.)

XXXVI.

I AM a glory to the wintry fields ;
 My shining foliage smiles above the snow ;
 My clustering fruit to hungry sparrows yields
 A welcome meal when nothing else can grow.

I deck the palace and the humblest home,
 The glittering window, and the sacred fane ;
 And Christmas scarce would be completely come,
 Without my presence in the country lane.

A promise and a hope of future joy
 Is in my fadeless leaf of rich deep green ;
 While present happiness is kindly symbolled by
 My scarlet berries' warm and ruddy sheen.

XXXVII.

I'M sweetest in the dewy morn,
 Though sweet in life or death ;
 I'm never found without a thorn,
 Yet bless with every breath.

XXXVIII.

PICTURES floating in the air,
 Sometimes frowning, sometimes fair ;
 Changeful both in form and hue ;
 Fading even as we view !

Pictures hanging on no wall ;
 Painted by no brush at all ;
 On no canvas,—by no hand ;
 Yet they are supremely grand !

Rosy, golden, white, or grey,—
 Scarcely absent night or day ;
 Bearing over all the land
 Blessings with a bounteous hand.

XXXIX.

SWEET smelling, pure white, star-like gem,
 Standing erect on your tall green stem ;
 Small golden centre, with six snowy rays,—
 Beautiful dwelling for fairies and fays.

XL.

THE rock is my father,
 My mother, the sea ;
 My nurse is the storm-wind,
 So rough and so free.

My home is the wide world,
 My bed the cold ground ;
 By stream or in desert
 I'm sure to be found.

My colours are many,
 With tints of each hue,—
 White, purple, and orange,
 Red, yellow, and blue.

Of all little objects
 I'm smallest in size ;
 Yet such is my number—
 All count it defies !

I live in no body,
 Yet am nearly all hands ;
 I hiss like a serpent,
 And shine like the sands.

Four letters will spell me ;
 Oh, what can it be ?
 Look out and behold me,
 I live by the sea !

(Sent to Alan at Rhyl.)

XLI.

WHO am I? can you tell?
You know my name well.

I've been to your home,
And I frequently come;
For though I am blind,
My way I can find
Over mountain and dell
To palace or cell!

My step's never heard,
I come like a bird,
And away go unseen,
Be the watch ne'er so keen!
By all I am sought,
But cannot be bought
By young or by old,
For silver or gold!

They say I am kind,
For, the best I can find
I cheerfully give
To all men that live!
The bird in his nest,
And the child at the breast,
To me owe their rest;
But the poor I love best.

I go rather late
 To the rich and the great,
 But whatever his state,
 There's no man I hate;
 Five letters will spell
 A friend you love well,
 And now for the game;
 Pray tell me my name.

(Reprinted from previous volume.)

XLII.

Y^ES, I know who you are!
 The first letter of star
 And one half of my "pa"
 Are beginning and end
 Of your title, my friend!
 The rest I should send
 In a basket of eels.
 A dish full of peels
 Your total reveals!
 But the word must be read
 From the tail to the head—
 Not like A to Z!

XLIII.

I AM a city of world-wide fame ;
Every Englishman knows my name ;
Nearly five millions of people strive,
Living and moving in my great hive.

Ebbing and flowing with every tide
Throbs my bosom of water wide ;
Thousands of vessels from every clime
Bring to me cargoes full and prime.

Wealth and glitter and sorrow and pain
Dwell within my vast domain.
I am spelled by L and D,
Followed ON by what you see !

XLIV.

(Written by Grandfather John when a youth, 1836.)

MY first is a word that is frequently used,
Or, perhaps, I might say with more truth, 'tis
abused;

It is always at top of the vile drunkard's tongue,
Or bursting aloud from the lewd wanton throng.

But I am not confined to the wanton or low,—
The preacher of holiness uses me too.
More than once I am found in the Bible, to show
As a prelude to nations the greatest of woe.

My second is what all men living have seen,
Or felt, if from infancy blind they have been.
I'm the pride of some men, the curse of some
mothers,
Regarded with carelessness often by others.

But taken together a word I express,
The name of a creature that no one will guess ;
I'm the son of my mother ; I'm mother and son,
And I always am mother before I am son.

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